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Community-Based Tourism in Bali: On the Road Towards Empowerment? An Interview with Djinaldi Gosana

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Djinaldi Gosana, the chairman of the Bali Community-Based Tourism Association (CoBTA) and the Executive Director of Bali Hotels Association, seeks to empower communities in Bali's rural areas through community-based tourism (CBT). Bali CoBTA is an NGO that engages with CBT in Bali's least developed regions and strives to build stronger communities by assisting them in using, above all, their cultural assets to engage in a type of tourism that is financially beneficial for the community and at the same time helps preserve local culture. This interview was conducted on 2 June 2013 during the author's PhD fieldwork on the topic of CBT and empowerment in Bali. Community empowerment is a highly contested concept that seems to be easily achieved in theory but difficult to implement in practice. Empowerment, along with the challenges that Bali CoBTA is facing, forms the focus of this interview.

Djinaldi Gosana, Präsident der Bali Community-Based Tourism Association (CoBTA) und geschäftsführender Direktor der Bali Hotels Association, bemüht sich darum, Gemeinschaften in Balis ländlichen Gebieten durch gemeinschaftsbasierten Tourismus (community-based tourism) zu stärken (to empower). Bali CoBTA ist eine NGO, die sich im Bereich des gemeinschaftsbasierten Tourismus in Balis sozio-ökonomisch am stärksten benachteiligten Regionen engagiert. Dies basiert auf der Verwendung ihrer kulturellen Ressourcen und dem Ziel, einen Tourismus zu fördern, der der Gemeinschaft finanziell zu Gute kommt, aber auch deren kulturelles Erbe bewahrt. Dieses Interview wurde am 2. Juni 2013 im Rahmen der Doktorats-Feldforschung der Autorin zum Thema gemeinschaftsbasierter Tourismus und Ermächtigung (empowerment) in Bali durchgeführt. ‚Community empowerment‘ ist ein sehr umstrittenes Konzept, welches in der Theorie einfach zu erreichen scheint, in der Praxis jedoch schwer zu verwirklichen ist. Fokus dieses Interviews sind das Konzept ‚empowerment‘ sowie die Herausforderungen, welchen Bali CoBTA gegenübersteht.

CLAUDIA DOLEZAL: What was the reason or what motivated you to create Bali CoBTA?

DJINALDI GOSANA: The reason why I am now building this community-based tourism is because, firstly, here in Bali, there is nobody else who can do the same thing that I am doing and, secondly, it is my promise that when I come back to Indonesia, after my hospitality

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2 The interview was conducted in English and the phrasing was retained as authentically as possible during the transcription with only minor changes in order to improve readability.

studies in Germany, I should do something, for poverty alleviation, to make the people more wealthy. You know, I am working for Bali Hotel Association and I have a lot of experience in opening hotels. And, I said – why not, you just move the management system in a hotel and bring it into the village, into the rural area. A hotel has a lobby, an information center; there is a restaurant, and also accommodation.

DOLEZAL: So how do you go about initiating CBT and communicating with the villages?

GOSANA: Perhaps I am the first who tries to apply the system of the hotel in the village. For example, imagine the hotel; if you bring it to the village, the system is the same, but the situation is different. Now, as I said, because of my experience, I know the expectations of the guests; they are looking for something authentic, not mass tourism. And what is good for Indonesia, or for Bali, is creative tourism. Creative tourism means that guests engage, involve, and work together – something they can remember. How can we make this happen, though? I go to the village and I would like to get a confirmation from the head of the community, “Is it true that your community wishes or expects to become visited by tourists?” And then he asks me, “Teach me the strategy, how can we do it?” I would answer, “Firstly, you and the community have to be able to develop the ‘seven charms’ – they are security, order, cleanliness, beauty, green surrounding, friendliness, and building a nice memory; number two, once we have the basics you have to have a committee. So think and choose within the village who can become the leader to develop tourism.” I need a minimum of three persons; ideally, it would be five in the committee: one for accommodation, one for food and beverages, one for marketing, one for accounting, and one for the activities or attractions. People will come to the village because of the attractions.

DOLEZAL: So how would you define CBT compared to other types of tourism?

GOSANA: What’s happening here in Bali is that people have some money and they say, “Ok, I will build something artificial in rural areas, like in Ubud³.” They make a stage, they build a hotel, because this person has some money, and then they call the community, “Come here, I have a guest!” You see? I feel that this one is not community-based tourism. Rather, community-based tourism means that the community has the share; that means that everyone, the 10 or 20 people are involved – that is the difference. If, say, Djinaldi has the money, I go to the village, I rent out 5 or 10 rooms there and if I am gone ... it is finished. That is the difference when you speak about community-based tourism: If I am gone, hopefully the people or the children can continue it. And then, let’s say, when there is an investment, not only one person is responsible, but the community. The investor, the bank that gives the money, is not giving the money to one person, but gives the support to the community. This is the difference!

³ Ubud is a town in Gianyar regency, which is famous for tourism.

DOLEZAL: I understand. Concerning empowerment, Bali CoBTA states on its website that its mission is to build strong communities and empower them. So, in your eyes, what does empowerment mean and how do you define empowerment?

GOSANA: There are three or five people in the committee. I give them the idea, I train them, I have the money, I trust them to use the money for the activities. But if I am not empowering them, as I said, when I am gone, it is finished. It will not continue. That is why we have to empower them, until they say, "Ok, I give up trying to engage in tourism, because I am a farmer, I am a worker, because I am a government official, I have no hospitality experience like you." And until that time, I will keep empowering them. It is not easy, as I said to you, it is a process. Then your empowerment will be successful.

DOLEZAL: So how would an empowered community look like or how does empowerment show itself in practice? When, would you say, is a community empowered?

GOSANA: When they ... when they can implement what I teach them, without me being there.

DOLEZAL: So you mean being independent?

GOSANA: Yes, when they are independent. But the people and their background ... it makes every village different from the other. One village can be fast, while in the other they might be fighting each other. It depends on who would like to become the 'king'. But as I said, I should not be too much involved there. Ideally, they make use of the same recipe, the 'seven charms', and if they need money, they can contact me, I will introduce them to the bank, etc. But they have to decide on the roles in the village and on who runs the show. If it fails, don't blame me.

So far, I haven't seen anything that endangers the community. However, it does not always go according to our expectations. Sometimes they promise something and then we come back and it wasn't put into practice. I do the empowerment, however, I have to monitor where the limit is. I realize that with those people in the community it is a process, you cannot expect anything within one or two years. I cannot expect that the community can serve as good as I can, because they are not hoteliers. They are not learning that. They learn to be a farmer, they learn to be a worker, maybe a woodcarver. However, I am sure, perhaps in another five, six years, when they are able to train themselves, this will be different.

DOLEZAL: But do you try to monitor what's going on and if it is in line with CBT, or if it is going in the wrong direction?

GOSANA: Of course! Wrong direction, I don't think so, as long as the activities belong to the community. I have an example where I empowered the people and it went in the wrong direction. If I say that it is a wrong direction, it is no longer managed by the community; they get money and let the community from another village work. And that is what I think is

wrong. That is not bringing benefits to that community, but to another community. Therefore, I've always said, you have to exploit what you have, what is authentic and original. Once you already take something from the outside, like, let's say, catering service from Denpasar, and then you outsource the dancers, you outsource the Gamelan⁴ orchestra, you outsource everything – your place becomes a venue. Then it goes in the wrong direction.

DOLEZAL: You said earlier that you want to fight poverty with CBT. Who do you think benefits from CBT or, to put it differently, do you think that the poor people in the village can also benefit?

GOSANA: Yes, I can give you an example when I was criticizing the community because they do not understand the concept. One day, I saw the community show a Gamelan orchestra. Imagine this, suddenly you see a master there playing the instrument. You think, "Wow, that looks professional!" And then I asked the community leader, "Who is that person?" – "Oh, that is our master, our best man! He already went all over the world, he is very famous!" – "So why do you let this person play in front of the community?" – "Because if it is not this person, we are ashamed, not proud." – "So that's a rich man, he went around the world!" – "So we made a mistake?" – "Yes, you should give the opportunity to the farmer who works in the morning as a farmer and has spare time and has a skill, who has a talent and can show it to the tourist, that is something original! Not the person who has already studied and learned and is professional for that." And then they realize. Therefore, CBT ideally would be to create the opportunity to let these people work who are not professionals.

DOLEZAL: But don't the people need training first?

GOSANA: No, because they are in the village, because of the authenticity, they can already do it, because they are talented! But sometimes they are not given the opportunity, because of the leader, the political leader. They are afraid, "If I let this farmer play, you know, the outcome will be bad." And that is what I criticize. And this has to be understood by the community.

DOLEZAL: And you tell them?

GOSANA: Yes, a second example: What's difficult for me and dangerous is when the community leader cannot explain or socialize the program properly. I give you an example: Imagine that a group of guests goes for a walk in the village. I think the committee in the village should be smart enough to know when the group will pass through the rice field, for example. So, on the way, the Balinese farmer women should already stand there and know – when from far away she sees the tourists coming – that she has to go there. Beforehand, she already prepares a big bag of rice or whatever. So when the tourists come, the woman

⁴ *Gamelan* is the Javanese word that is used amongst others in Bali to refer to a traditional musical orchestra, which usually consists of a group of people playing a number of different instruments similar to xylophones.

will take the bag and put it up on her head and then the tourists will say: “Oh, Balinese women are very strong!” And then they take a picture. This is something you will not see in your country. After they’ve left, you put it back and go back to work. Not that suddenly the tourists come and they say: “Oh, in the program it says that we will see the farmers work, but where are they?” This is why you have to be creative in using the program without disturbing the regular job of the farmer. The farmer can work over there, but if the guests come from the road without passing by the farmer, it is not efficient, right? The timing has to be right. Therefore you have to make a show. That is reality.

DOLEZAL: So you think it is still authentic if it is a show?

GOSANA: Yes, because daily life means you do it like that. They are just doing it at the same time when the tourists come – to show them. That’s the reason why I said at the end of the month, the woman must get money, because this woman is also dancing, only on a different stage. Tourists can sit and see the dancer in a nice costume in the evening. If they give money to the dancer, why couldn’t we pay money to the farmer? It is the same stage, only a different kind, you understand? Therefore, a good management of CBT is a package. As if you visited Walt Disney Land. You pay once, and then you don’t need to pay again when you are entering the different attractions. That’s it! The money has to be distributed. Some money goes to the farmer, some to the kids who were showing things to the guests on their way – who didn’t realize that they were professional ... Everybody gets something.

DOLEZAL: But how can you make sure that the blacksmith gets money, that the farmer gets money? How can you make sure it doesn’t go to the leader?

GOSANA: I empower the community, that’s the difference. Lucky me, that I am a little bit close with the community, they tell me, “Djinaldi, what’s happening in the community, we experience this and that.”

DOLEZAL: I am sure there is a lot happening ... can you see any disparities in the villages because of tourism?

GOSANA: As I said to you from the beginning, it is dangerous when the community leader is not socializing properly with the community. That is one big mistake. There is an opportunity. If you only tell four or five people, who have the money and invest – that is wrong! You must sit together and hold a meeting, and you tell for example: “There is a guest looking for a bicycle. Everybody who would like to lend a bicycle, please report to me and I will organize it.” If a person didn’t know about that in the end and the conglomerate of the village gets the business, of course, this person will be angry. So then there is no more security and safety, and they will fight each other. And in the end no tourists will come to visit.

DOLEZAL: What do you think about the caste system in Bali, do you think that the caste system could be an obstacle to this, as it may be difficult to delegate power to the lower caste?

GOSANA: Yes, I know. But you know, it depends on the higher caste and how they behave. What I am trying to do now, since I have experience in Bedulu village – I am doing *Wisata Puri*, tourism related to the royal family. We have to use the opportunity; we have to utilize this caste system to implement what I explained before. I don't have the intention to awaken feudalism, but: Forty or fifty years ago, the royal family had a lot of land and the community worked on that land. The money they earned they gave to the king. So what happened after the land reform: The money comes, and who should maintain the temple, the *puri*, or the house where the cultural and economic activities happen? Only the royal family who has a sense of entrepreneurship can survive, just like the Ubud royal family, because they use the *puri* as an icon, and tourists come. The king invites the tourist to the village, to the royal family house, to the palace, for dinner, dancing, and so on. It is more attractive for the tourists, right? And if people in the community want to do tourist activities, yes, we can schedule for the guests who will stay in the royal family house to visit the community. So with these activities, the community will respect the king again.

DOLEZAL: So how do the others benefit then, besides the royal family?

GOSANA: It is the same, the *desa wisata*⁵, only that the *desa*⁶ doesn't have the royal family and its attraction. The royal family brings the attraction, it is more beneficial. For the royal family it is not the money – it is the prestige. They could not maintain the relationship with the community, they could not make the palace look always nice and fresh, they could not maintain the *para*, the market, and so on. So, by having *Wisata Puri*, it is the same like 40 years ago. But the difference is that the community is now utilizing the tourists to make money.

DOLEZAL: So if the tourists stay in the *puri*, will there be other homestays, too?

GOSANA: Yes, as not all *puri* will welcome tourists. Some think it is a sacral place and that only the royal family may stay there. Other *puri* don't mind. So therefore, there are two options. We utilize the royal family house for cultural activities, like dinner together with the prince, where people can learn dancing, cooking, painting, the history of the area, but they stay in the homestays in the village. If the royal family has a piece of land, I can build a replica of the royal family houses there. If you would like to stay and feel like a part of the royal family, then, behind the wall of the royal family house, there are some villas with nice swimming pool and so on.

DOLEZAL: For you, what are some indicators that a CBT project has been successful – if the tourist is happy or if the community is happy?

5 I.e. tourism village or what Bali CoBTA names 'community-based tourism'.

6 I.e. 'village' in Indonesian.

GOSANA: Yeah, if I see that the community is happy, because before they are poor and now they have a better life because of the activities. For example, in Blimbingsari: I started that place in 2004; and now people already have a different career.

DOLEZAL: So for you, a successful project means that the community improves their standard of living?

GOSANA: Yes, it means that the people who are involved in the activities get a better life. That is what it means for me.

DOLEZAL: What do you think are the challenges for Bali CoBTA? What is difficult when you work in CBT?

GOSANA: There are a lot of challenges. The biggest challenge for me is when a community is not professional – particularly the tourism committees that organize tourism in the villages. Bali CoBTA empowers and delegates, yes. But the problem is the human resources: The professionalism to handle the things on the ground is not there. It is still a challenge. But I believe that in another three years it will be different.

DOLEZAL: So you think it takes some time?

GOSANA: Yes, sometimes the challenge is the community itself; if they are not sure they want to do it or not. And that is where the community leader has to convince. If the community leader is not professional, that's difficult. Second, they don't understand that tourism is only a trigger. The trading through tourism and investment generates more revenue for the community. I give you an example: CBT should consist of three activities: tourism, trading and investment. Guests come to a village, they see a piece of land, and think, "Hey, that's good for tourists, I would like to invest and build some villas here." And then the community says, "Yes, we help you!" They build, they invest. It means more money comes in and it can be managed by the community or by the tourist himself. And then people come and say, "Oh, the coffee tastes delicious! Where does it come from?" – "Oh yes, I can arrange something for you, how many kilos do you need in a year?" You see, you just say, "I can supply." If this opportunity is not used, not taken by the community, then you will wait ages until you are rich. And these things need some time. So if they use only tourism, it takes ages – but if you can create trading or investment and there is still a piece of land that you can build on ... That is my challenge!

DOLEZAL: So this is what you tell the villages?

GOSANA: This is what I teach them.

DOLEZAL: Do you think that if land is sold and more tourists come to the village, that agriculture could be replaced?

GOSANA: I never tell them to sell. Collaborate, yes! It is good for the investor; it is also good for the community. That is why I said to you, if we can synergize tourism and trading and whatever can be invested, we can make the poor get rich faster. And yes, there is still a lot to be done, that's why we have to go back again, empower them, make a CBT center in the village, or a CBT college. If we have some people who would like to stay there and teach them how to speak English – fantastic! What I am doing is just idealism, and I am happy if I can make other people more productive and free them from poverty. That is what it is all about. For me, you feel rich when you can give to someone else. And again, the challenge is that sometimes we try to be good and teach people, but the result is not as fast as we expect. But again, communities do not belong to us. We just have the heart to help and it is up to the community to make use of the help or not.

DOLEZAL: Thank you very much for your time to do this interview!